

ON THE RECORD

A family violence newsletter for the Alberta criminal justice system

MAR 7 1997

WINTER 95/96 ISSUE CONTENTS

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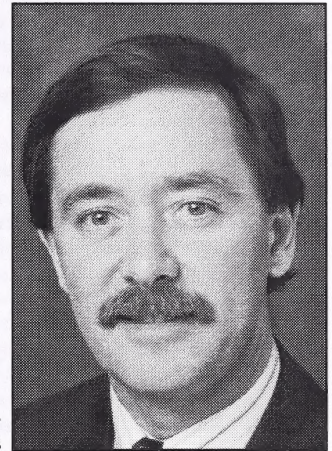
Province eliminates restraining order fee

Alberta courts stopped charging a \$200 commencement fee for restraining orders on January 2, 1996. Brian Evans, Alberta's Minister of Justice, announced that his department would forgo this revenue to ensure that anyone who needs a restraining order can get one.

"This change will ensure that the commencement fee for obtaining a restraining order will not be an impediment to those at risk, who need an order, but do not have sufficient financial resources to pay the filing fee," said Evans.

Agencies that support victims of domestic violence were jubilant when they heard the government dropped the fee. Calgary United Way president Ed Johnston said, "It could very well lead to lives being saved. It's one thing in a whole arsenal of responses that needs to be available to assist these victims."

Calgary Legal Guidance's Executive Director, Merrill Cooper, says that 96% of her clients did not have access to even the \$200 previously required to file a restraining order. That meant she had to take this money out of the funds donated to run the program. "No-one, including the province, wanted to see charitable dollars going towards a filing fee," she said. "We're just so delighted that the filing fee has been dropped."



Alberta Justice Minister Brian Evans

Calgary victims can get restraining orders free of charge within 24 to 48 hours of the violence through the Court Preparation Program involving the police, Calgary Legal Guidance and the YWCA. It ensures that victims' legal, social and protection needs are addressed as soon as possible following the abuse so they can make the best decisions for their futures. Work is underway to develop similar programs in the province. Filing fees for other court actions still apply. If a person requires a service in addition to the restraining order, such as a Petition for Divorce, the charge for the petition remains in effect. ♦

Crime prevention works

C *Crime Prevention Works for All of Us* is the theme of Alberta Crime Prevention Week 1996, from May 12 to 18. Family violence is a crime, so think about taking advantage of Crime Prevention Week to promote what you and others do to prevent family violence.

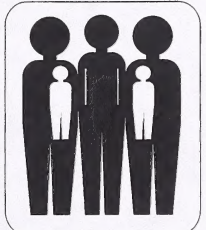
Alberta Crime Prevention Week is a chance to heighten awareness and focus on the shared responsibility for making our communities safer. Invite

a representative from your local police service to discuss how you can take steps to address your concerns.

As part of Alberta Crime Prevention Week 1996, the Alberta Justice Crime Prevention Awards will be presented. They recognize the extraordinary achievements of individuals, businesses and community organizations throughout the province in preventing crime. Alberta Justice is pleased to hold the Alberta

Crime Prevention Week Kick-off and Awards Ceremony with the cooperation of the 1996 official co-host, the Edmonton Police Service. For more information contact Gloria Ohrt at (403) 427-3457. ♦

Crime Prevention



works for all of us

Report calls for "no contact order"

The Alberta Law Reform Institute says victims of domestic abuse should be able to get no contact orders to protect them from their abusers. This is the main recommendation in its report *Domestic Abuse: Toward an Effective Legal Response* which was released in August 1995.

"We are told through our consultation that the current law of restraining orders does not work well because: obtaining these orders is procedurally difficult; enforcement of the orders once obtained is problematic and inconsistent; and victims are reluctant to enter into an environment that they think is unsympathetic and underestimates the reality of their abuse," say the report's authors.

The report suggests that as soon as victims decide to separate from their abusers they need access to a simple, effective remedy, such as a no contact order, that will:

- secure a safe space for them away from their abusers;
- interface with other civil law remedies and give victims a better chance of breaking free from their abusers' control;
- be quick and inexpensive; and
- take place in an environment that shows empathy for victims of domestic abuse.

In Calgary, a system is already in place to ensure that abused spouses can get restraining orders within 48 hours of requesting them (see *Province Eliminates Restraining Order Fee*). In Edmonton, Crown prosecutors, police and the judiciary have agreed to speed up the process for obtaining peace bonds arising out of domestic disputes.

The Alberta Law Reform Institute produced the report to initiate discussion on how Alberta's legal system can be improved to better serve victims of domestic abuse. Contact

the institute in Edmonton to request a copy of the report or provide your comments:

Telephone: (403) 492-5291

Fax: (403) 492-1790

Internet:

Reform@ALRI.UAlberta.Ca❖

Cases of women jailed for killing abusers get second look

Ontario Court Justice Lynn Ratushny is reviewing the case files of women convicted of killing their abusive partners. Over 90 women have applied to have their sentences reviewed (at least six from Alberta), saying they killed their spouses in self-defence. Applications were accepted until the end of January and Judge Ratushny says it will take about a year to review all the cases.

The federal government ordered the review last October. Ratushny has the power to recommend new trials or early release from prison but the federal government has the final say on what happens. Ratushny is also expected to make recommendations for improving the self-defence provisions of the *Criminal Code*.

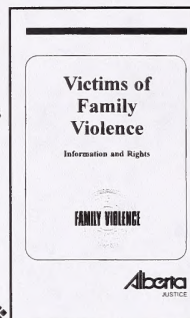
The review comes as a result of the Supreme Court judgment recognizing "battered spouse syndrome" as a defence. In 1990, Madame Justice Bertha Wilson upheld a jury's acquittal of Angelique Lyn Lavallee for killing her boyfriend. After suffering years of abuse, the Winnipeg woman fatally shot Kevin Rust when he threatened to return and kill her.

Justice Wilson said it was reasonable for Lavallee to believe she had no choice but to use lethal force to defend herself. This ruling recognized that a woman's history of abuse is relevant in deciding her guilt or innocence.❖

Booklet updated

We've revised our booklet *Victims of Family Violence: Information and Rights*. It's a 26-page guide for victims outlining police intervention, the court process, sentencing and victims' rights. To order copies contact:

Alberta Justice
Communications
3rd Fl.,
9833 - 109 St.
Edmonton, AB
T5K 2E8
Telephone:
(403) 427-8530
Fax:
(403) 422-7363❖



ON THE RECORD

On the Record is published by Alberta Justice twice a year (winter and summer) to help people working in the justice system share ideas about preventing family violence. For copies of this newsletter contact:

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On the Record welcomes submissions from the police, courts and correctional services throughout Alberta. Please send articles for the next edition by **May 15, 1996**, to the address above.

The opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily the views or policies of Alberta Justice. The editor reserves the right to use, in whole or in part, any article submitted. Authors' names will be published unless otherwise requested.

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Family Violence Training Focuses on Success

Nearly 50 police, Crown prosecutors and corrections' staff received in-depth training in dealing with family violence in Alberta's justice system. They attended a three-day course sponsored by Alberta Justice that prepared them to train their colleagues on the best ways to respond to family violence. Held at Alberta Justice's Staff College from November 15-17, 1995, the course has been an annual tradition since 1991.

Best Practices was the theme of this year's course which included presentations and group activities. "In previous courses, we've talked about what we should do or what would be nice to do, so this year we wanted to focus on what's actually been done and the positives that have been observed," said Peter Teasdale, one of the course organizers. Success stories were heard from Edmonton's Spousal Abuse Follow-up Teams (policing), Calgary's Probation Officer Training Project (corrections), and St. Paul's Follow-up Team (prosecution).

Brian Evans, Alberta's Justice Minister and Attorney General, started

the course off by congratulating the group on its successes such as the Domestic Violence Registry Project which centralized information about restraining orders for easy police reference. However, he added that the rash of spousal homicides last summer shows we must seek more effective measures to control family violence in Alberta. Evans emphasized that family violence is against the law and will not be tolerated. He said this message must be reinforced in the minds of offenders, police, judges, lawyers and the Alberta public.

Lots of useful information was provided in the sessions and in the extensive participant's kit everyone received. Those attending also had the opportunity to work with others from their areas to develop a local action plan for addressing family violence.

A number of Chief Crown prosecutors, including Gary McCuaig, Q.C. (Edmonton), Bruce Fraser, Q.C. (Calgary), and Robin Dann (Lethbridge), attended the course demonstrating the Crown office commitment to multidisciplinary training

about family violence. They contributed to some lively debate. One discussion centred around the Violence Against Women Survey's finding that women with violent fathers-in-law are three times more likely to be assaulted by their partners than women with non-violent fathers-in-law. This suggests that a preventative strategy must address the inter-generational nature of family violence.

Neil McCrank, Justice's Deputy Minister and Deputy Attorney General, made closing remarks to the participants. He encouraged them to apply what they'd learned to their communities and continue their good work in this difficult area.

Teasdale is pleased that participants find the course useful and informative because studies show that more training and education are the key things you can do to combat family violence. He says the course also succeeds because it trains police, correction's staff and Crown prosecutors together so they all get the benefit of each other's point of view. "Often this is just as valuable as the course content," Teasdale says. ♦

Prosecutors: CAISSE, Trudy, St. Paul, Prosecutors' Office; CARUC, Brian, Peace River, Prosecutors' Office; CLIFTON, David, Hinton, Prosecutors' Office; COUILLARD, Troy, Ft. McMurray, Prosecutors' Office; DANN, Robin, Lethbridge, Chief Crown Prosecutor; DOYLE, Michelle, Vegreville, Prosecutors' Office; FRASER, Bruce, Calgary, Chief Crown Prosecutor; McCUAIG, Gary, Edmonton, Chief Crown Prosecutor; MUNRO, Alan, Grande Prairie, Prosecutors' Office; NEWBY, Lynette, St. Paul, Family Services (Presenter); SKINNER, Bert, Red Deer, Prosecutors' Office; STEIN, Larry, Calgary, Prosecutors' Office. **Police:** DYKSLAG, Mario, Lacombe Police Service; EARL, Gordon Sgt., Medicine Hat Police Service; SCOUT, Rodrick, Siksika Nation Police Service; HENDERSON, Edwin, Calgary Police Service; SINGER, Les, Blood Tribe Police; SYMINGTON, Brad, Calgary Police Service; JOSEPH, Randy Sgt., Lethbridge Police Service; STOKKER, John Cst., Edmonton Police Service; WILLIS, Ed Cst., Edmonton Police Service; BEST, Judy Cpl., Red Deer S/D RCMP; BUTT, Tammy Cst., Olds RCMP; CARROLL, C. Cst., St. Albert RCMP; COLES, Walter Cpl., Lethbridge S/D RCMP; COHN, Donald, Sherwood Park RCMP; GEROW, C.L. Cst., Wainwright RCMP; GRASSICK, Daren, Grande Prairie RCMP VSU; LEITCH, Dorine, Fairview RCMP; MacDONALD, Grant Cst., Leduc RCMP; OAKES, Wayne, St. Plain RCMP; RICHARDSON, Terry Cst., Slave Lake RCMP; TOURAC, Mike Cst., Whitecourt RCMP; WARREN, Jim Cpl., Brooks RCMP; WOODS, Mike, Red Deer City RCMP.

Social Services: Lorraine Lundquist, Family & Community Support Services. **Corrections:** ANDERSON, Debbie, Red Deer Correctional Services; AYERS, Robert, Calgary Community Corrections; BELLAMINI, Rhonda, Drayton Valley Community Corrections; CHARBONNEAU, Kay, Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Centre; DEER, Ramona, Calgary Young Offender Centre; DUSKE, Monica, Lethbridge Corrections; LOCKYER, Pamela, Calgary Community Corrections; MADILL, Caroline, Edmonton Community Corrections; McLEAN, Donna, Edmonton Young Offender Centre; PUGH, Marie, Lloydminster Community Corrections; WALROTH, Karen, Calgary Community Corrections (Presenter); WILSON, Andrew, Drumheller Community Corrections.

OHRT, Gloria, Course Coordinator, Policing;
SCOTT, Cathy, Course Coordinator, Corrections;
TEASDALE, Peter, Course Coordinator, Prosecutions.



Police respond to elder abuse

Police in both Edmonton and Calgary are concerned about elder abuse. That's why they've each designated one officer to specialize in helping seniors stay safe in their cities. Constables Rudy Desmeules (Edmonton Police Service) and Tom Butler (Calgary Police Service) dedicate their days to giving seminars on elder abuse and helping make seniors less vulnerable to crime.

Family members are the worst culprits when it comes to elder abuse and widowed mothers are most often their targets. Emotional and financial abuse by family is most common, followed by physical abuse. Sexual abuse and neglect also occur. A small Alberta study conducted in 1985 reported that over half the victims of elder abuse were living with the persons who abused them.

"Awareness of elder abuse is at the same point now, as it was for child abuse about 15 years ago," said Desmeules, who's been seniors' coordinator for the Edmonton Police Service for the last three years. All cases of elder abuse are referred to him and at least one or two seniors approach him after every seminar to share their personal stories. In one case, a widow's son kept badgering her to sell her home and let him look after her money. She finally relented and gave him power of attorney over her affairs before she went in for surgery. After three weeks in hospital, she emerged to find he'd sold her house and furniture and placed her in an old-age home.

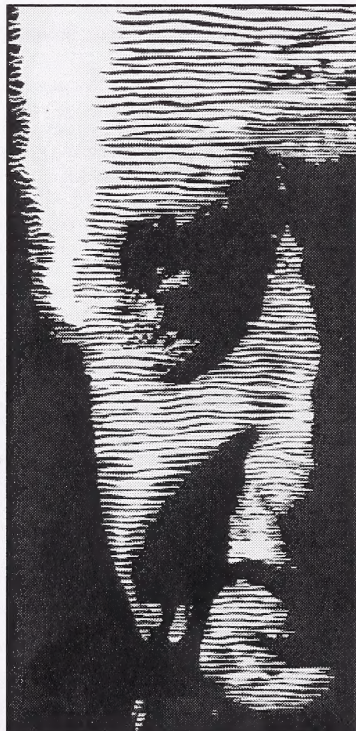
In another case, a son threatened his parents would never see their grandchildren again if they didn't provide money for his mortgage. They suspected he had a drug problem.

Sometimes the abuse is not so blatant. Abusers may not even recognize their actions as abuse. For example, a daughter was angry that her widowed father had a new companion with whom he was travelling exten-

sively. She felt he was spending her inheritance even though he wasn't paying his companion's expenses.

"It's difficult when there's family involved because seniors don't want to admit they're being abused by family members," said Butler, who just officially became Calgary's Seniors' Liaison Officer in January, though he's been doing this work for a long time. Butler works at developing a good relationship with seniors so they trust him and feel comfortable around him. "You'd be surprised what they tell you once you gain their trust," he says. "I do have grey hair too, which really helps me fit in."

Elder abuse is a crime and police will lay charges if the results of their investigation warrant them. However, both Desmeules and Butler agree that staying sociable and learning to recognize the signs of abuse are the best ways to avoid becoming victims. ♦



To avoid abuse

DO:

- stay sociable and develop a "buddy system" with a friend who can visit you weekly
- have your own telephone and post and open your own mail
- stay organized and make sure others know where things are kept
- take care of your personal needs. Keep regular medical, dental and other personal appointments
- have your pension and other income deposited directly to your bank account
- ask for help when you need it. Discuss your plans with your attorney, physician or family members

DON'T:

- live with a person who has a background of violent behaviour or alcohol or drug abuse
- leave your home unattended
- carry cash or jewellery or leave prized possessions lying around
- accept personal care in return for transfer or assignment of your property or assets unless a lawyer, advocate, or trusted person acts as a witness to the transaction
- allow anyone to keep details of your finances or property management from you

Signs of abuse

In older persons

Increasing depression, anxiety, becoming timid, withdrawn or unresponsive, hostility, confusion, physical injury, vague health complaints, new poverty, longing for death, anxiousness to please

In care-givers

New self-neglect, conflicting stories, mounting resentment, excusing failure, shifting blame, aggressive/defensive behaviour, substance abuse, unusual fatigue, new affluence, new health problems, preoccupation/depression, withholding food or medication

Who can help?

Local health units, senior citizens centres, family and community support services or local social services agencies, Alberta Family and Social Services District Offices, Alberta Mental Health Clinics, Offices of the Public Guardian

In Edmonton: Elderly Adult Resource Services (EARS) has a 24 hour phone service at (403) 439-3100. **In Calgary:** the Kerby Centre has lots of programs for seniors. Call (403) 265-0661.

Wishes out of reach

Here is 73 year old "Maggie's" wishlist of simple requests denied her during an abusive marriage:

- To drive the car.
- To visit my children.
- To give them a small birthday or Christmas gift.
- To buy food I like at the store.
- Not to be called names.
- Not to be hit and threatened.
- To have a relationship with my sister.
- To be allowed to have friends.
- To be allowed to visit and go shopping.
- To go out to eat once in a while.
- To take a trip with the seniors.
- To have cake and ice cream on birthdays.
- To go to dinner when the kids invite us, also picnics in the summer.

After 50 years of abuse, Maggie finally left her husband and took refuge in a shelter for battered women.

Source: *The Soroptomist of the Americas* ♦

Wife upset Blair jailed for beating her

Kimberlee Blair blames women's groups for sending her husband Carl to jail because they spotlighted his case. But, it's really the Crown, representing all of us, that pursued Blair's prosecution because it can't ignore domestic violence no matter how much the victim would like it to.

"These cases are never easy for the Crown," said Barry Hill, Chief Crown Prosecutor for Wetaskiwin, who handled the Blair case. "But the wishes of the forgiving wife don't dictate what we do. The theory is that it's a crime against society and it must be prosecuted."

Carl Blair, 42, was sentenced to six months in jail January 18, 1996, after pleading guilty to assaulting his wife following a drinking binge. He was originally acquitted of the charge in October 1994, because the judge believed he was too drunk to know what he was doing.

The Crown appealed this decision based on new evidence demonstrating Blair had motive for beating his wife and therefore knew what he was doing. The Appeal Court granted a new trial. Blair subsequently pled guilty.

The so-called drunk defence became available to Blair after a Supreme Court decision in September 1994, which acquitted Montreal's Henri Daviault of raping a 65-year-old woman in a wheel chair because he was drunk and not responsible for his actions. After much public outcry, the drunk defence was outlawed in September 1995, by amendments to the *Criminal Code*. ♦

Calgary's "fugitive Mom" acquitted

Provincial Court Judge Heather Lamoreaux acquitted a Calgary Mom of parental abduction in December because she honestly believed her ex-husband would kill her and her children if they didn't run. The woman, who can't be named to protect her children's identity, fled to the U.S. with her three children last March after a court granted her ex-husband unsupervised visits with their nine-year-old son. After 2½ months on the run, she was arrested at a border crossing while returning to Canada.

The man admitted that he severely abused his wife during their 10 year relationship. He also pled guilty in 1989 to sexually assaulting her daughter, now 12, from a previous marriage.

The woman was granted permanent custody of her three children in January when her ex-husband gave up fighting for custody of their son. He is still allowed unsupervised visits with the boy and supervised visits with his four-year-old daughter. ♦



FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Legal community wakes up to family violence

Family violence was on the breakfast menu for members of Alberta's legal community and others attending an Edmonton fundraiser last November. The annual event, now in its fifth year, is organized in memory of the 14 Montreal women Marc Lepine murdered in December 1989.

More than 700 people, including Alberta's Justice Minister and many Justice staff, paid to eat breakfast and hear Supreme Court of Canada Justice Beverly McLaughlin discuss stopping violence against women and children. About \$35,000 was raised for the Sexual Assault Centre and the Elizabeth Fry Society.

McLaughlin says the justice system must get tough on domestic violence. "For centuries, the law has trained its sights upon violence outside the home. When faced with a welt on a child's back or a black eye on a woman's face, society preferred to turn a blind eye," she said. Combating that violence is the law's and society's vital unfinished business, she said.

Known for her vigorous voice on equality before the law for both sexes, McLaughlin says domestic violence is the result of inequality within the family. "The law must work to foster a concept of equality that undermines the idea that one individual has the right to subjugate others," she said.

Joanne Taylor-Weir attended the breakfast and represented Alberta Justice on the event's organizing committee. As a first-time committee member, she was impressed with the dedication and commitment other members brought to the task. "They demonstrated strong conviction towards eliminating violence against women and children," she said. The group is planning its sixth fundraising breakfast in late November or early December near the anniversary of the Montreal massacre. ♦

Civil suit pays off

"Domestic violence will not be tolerated. I want to send that message loud and clear," said Justice Jim Foster when he ordered Michael Joseph McAlinden to pay Bonnie Meade \$25,000 for the beatings he inflicted on her. Meade, a 39-year-old Red Deer woman, is one of the few battered spouses to sue an abuser in civil court. She originally sued McAlinden for \$100,000, but was awarded \$15,000 in general damages and \$10,000 in punitive damages last August.

Previously convicted of criminal assault against Meade, McAlinden received 18 months probation along with the four months he spent in custody while awaiting trial. Meade said the 38-year-old unemployed rig worker beat her frequently between May 1991 and December 1993, even while she was pregnant with his child.

Justice Foster predicts that more battered spouses will seek compensation in civil court following this decision, but Rhonda Breitkrutz, program director of Edmonton's Lurana Shelter for battered women, says she's not so sure. "It's an interesting route to take ... but I would guess that it wouldn't be an option for a lot of people."

Many women don't have the money to mount a civil lawsuit and those who can afford one may have difficulty collecting any damages they're awarded. "Some men don't pay whether they can afford it or not," said Breitkrutz. "It's not even a financial issue."

In spite of the barriers, civil lawsuits increase the options battered spouses can consider. Justice Foster's decision indicates that Alberta's civil courts are taking domestic violence seriously. For Bonnie Meade, the trip to civil court was definitely worthwhile: "I feel I got back my confidence and self-respect," she said. ♦

Brenda Strafford gives battered spouses time

Clients approved for stays at the new Brenda Strafford Centre in Calgary can settle in for six months instead of the usual 21 days they are limited to in regular shelters. "The feeling is that it gives them enough time to accomplish what they want to accomplish—things like divorce proceedings, financial arrangements, and child custody and access agreements," said Lorraine Alfonsi, the centre's director.

The Brenda Strafford Centre, which opened January 15, 1996, is one of three second-stage housing facilities in the province that allows longer stays for clients and their children. Calgary's Discovery House and Edmonton's Wings of Providence Society offer similar housing to battered spouses and their families. Second-stage housing is designed for clients referred from regular shelters because they need long-term housing and support.

The centre offers clients 23 self-contained, two-bedroom suites that are fully furnished including linen, dishes and kitchen utensils. There's 24-hour security and convenient access to schools and services. Support services for the family including individual and group counselling are also provided.

Located in a high-rise apartment building owned by the City of Calgary, the centre is operated by Calhome Properties. The project is funded by the Brenda Strafford Foundation, a fund set up by a local businessman in memory of his late wife. ♦

Working group hears about Alberta's success

Several Alberta Justice initiatives to address family violence were highlighted at the federal/provincial working group on violence against women held October 20, 1995 in Ottawa. The workshop was part of a meeting for senior status of women officials from across Canada.

Janina Vanderpost, Manager of Women's Policy and Programs for the Citizenship and Women's Secretariat, Alberta Community Development, made Alberta's presentation at the workshop. She provided an overview of Justice initiatives in education, enforcement and victim support.

Education was discussed through a brief history of the development and goals of the **Train the Trainers** course for police, Crown prosecutors, and corrections' personnel. Participants are exposed to diverse topics, including survivors of family violence, dynamics of family violence, interviewing techniques, working with shelters, court preparation, Aboriginal issues, immigrant perspectives on family violence, sentencing, and child welfare issues. The approach recognizes that to deal with family violence, all sectors of the justice system—police, prosecutors, and corrections' staff must work together. (See *Family vio-*

lence training focuses on success for more on the course.)

In the area of enforcement, Janina provided information on the **Domestic Violence Registry Project**. Alberta Justice initiated this project in 1993 to enlist police services in establishing restraining order registries throughout the province. As family violence typically escalates in frequency and severity, it was considered crucial for police to have ready access to valid, up-to-date information on restraining orders, peace bonds and firearm prohibitions.

Also, police had long expressed other concerns with the enforcement of civil restraining orders. Problems included lack of standards and consistency in the wording of restraining orders; difficulties with victims not always having their restraining orders at the time of alleged breaches; and lack of evidence that the respondents were aware that restraining orders had been issued.

Restraining order registries have been in place at all Alberta police services since December 31, 1994. The Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) system was used as a

central registry because it is the national police data base containing information on criminal convictions and ongoing police investigations. CPIC is the first and sometimes only data system police check when responding to a domestic violence call. This system is available to all police services across Alberta, which is particularly important when a domestic violence or stalking victim moves from the region where the restraining order was first issued.

In the area of victim support, Janina reviewed Calgary's **Court Preparation Program** which joins a lawyer, a social worker and the police into a quick-action team to provide immediate help to victims of family violence. Calgary Legal Guidance's Executive Director Merrill Cooper, who heads up the program, says it has the best success rate of any similar program she's heard of in North America. Only two of 164 people the program helped, from April 1, to October 15, 1995, failed to testify against their abusers. Without the program, it was common for 35% of victims to back out before getting to court. (For more information on the Court Preparation Program see the last issue of *On the Record* and *Province eliminates restraining order fee* in this issue.)

Janina also presented Alberta Justice's print resources in support of victims of family violence, including *Family Violence Referral Cards*, which police can give to persons in risky situations for domestic violence, and the booklet *Victims of Family Violence—Information and Rights*.

Several other jurisdictions also presented information on initiatives to curb family violence. Ontario, Newfoundland, the Yukon, British Columbia, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, the Northwest Territories and the federal government all provided reports. ❖

Wendy Joy (Senior Research Officer, Alberta Community Development)

Line-up

Family violence between generations and dating violence are explored in Azimuth Theatre's two new plays. *Back Pocket Lennie*, available from February 19 until May 31, 1996, examines child abuse and its prevention. This powerful drama written by Sandy Paddick is suitable for audiences 16 years of age and over.

Armour, available from September 16 until December 13, 1996, dramatizes dating violence and ways to handle it. Written by Brian Marler, this play

is suitable for audiences 12 and over. Actors and Azimuth staff discuss the plays with their audiences following each performance.

Contact Pam Gusek at (403) 448-9165 to book performances for your community or workplace. The Azimuth Theatre Association is a non-profit, charitable organization committed to developing research-based performance art which examines critical issues and empowers individuals, institutions and communities to initiate positive change. ❖

Azimuth
T H E A T R E

Don't rely on risk assessment alone

Risk assessment tools can increase the danger women face from abusive partners if social service workers rely on them alone to predict the possibility of further family violence. So says the report *Desperately Seeking Certainty* released by the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues in October 1995.

According to the report, there's real danger in focusing only on risk assessment tools because this "could direct the attention of workers to predicting problems, rather than building solutions to prevent risk from escalating." Instead of relying on tools to provide all the answers, the report recommends a collaborative approach to the problem of family violence. The report says we need to share information about the risks, provide support for victims and frontline workers, and share responsibility for the safety of women, their children and their husbands or partners.

The report applauds some of the work that's already been done in the province to protect women from family violence. It points to the government's Office for the Prevention of Family Violence, the Edmonton Police Service's Spousal Violence Follow-up Team, and Calgary's Probation Officer Training Project as good examples to follow. Lethbridge also has an innovative post-charge program which provides Crown prosecutors with valuable information for preventing future risk and harm. And a variety of women's shelters throughout the province offer leading-edge programming for both men and women affected by family violence.

But more still needs to be done because family violence costs us all. As one victim said, "I may be the one in danger right now, but his violence is not just my problem. Look at all the money that's been spent on getting him to court and to jail. Look at all the money that's been spent fixing my body and keeping my kids when I couldn't take care of them. And what about other people he might hurt years from now. This danger is not just my problem. It's a problem we all share."

Copies of the report are available from the Alberta Advisory Council on Women's Issues, 10405 Jasper Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, T5J 4R7, telephone: (403) 422-0668, fax: (403) 422-9111. ♦

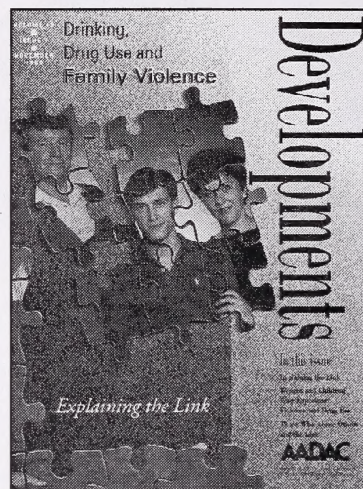
Information focus of family violence month

The Office for the Prevention of Family Violence (OPFV) had another successful Family Violence Prevention Month campaign during November 1995. Collaboration is always a feature of the campaign and this year's efforts included:

- using Goodwill Industries to package 5000 family violence information kits with the Goodwill logo on the envelope;
- providing Blockbuster Video and Smitty's Restaurants with colouring books to distribute;
- accessing new distribution outlets such as many of the province's churches, and substantially increasing OPFV's mailing list;
- working with AADAC (Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission) to re-issue the popular phone booklet and develop two new brochures on the connections between family violence and alcohol and drug abuse;
- liaising with the Edmonton and Calgary Family Violence Prevention Committees to update their materials; and
- acting on a great community suggestion to rework our 98 *Ways to Say Very Good*.

The requests were plentiful and the fax machine worked overtime to keep up. Staff spent hours filling orders. All in all, everyone at OPFV is pleased with the results and the positive feedback received.

Liz Massiah (Manager of Information Services, Office for the Prevention of Family Violence, Alberta Family and Social Services). ♦



AADAC Newsletter



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